

Olean First Presbyterian Church
Christmas Eve 2022

Welcome

Hymn ~ *Angels, from the Realms of Glory* ~ No. 143 (verses 1, 2, 4)

Angels, from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
you, who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king!

Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
yonder shines the infant light:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king!

All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son,
evermore your voices raising
to the eternal Three in One:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king!

Call to Worship

We come to worship
Because we belong in community.
We come to worship
To be surrounded in hope.
We come to worship
To draw near to God.
We come to worship
To find that God has already drawn near to us.
Love is drawn here. Let us worship!

Advent Song ~ *Light One Candle* ~ Natalie Sleeth

Light one candle for hope, one bright candle for hope.
He brings hope to ev'ry heart. He comes! He Comes!

Light one candle for peace, one bright candle for peace.
He brings peace to ev'ry heart. He comes! He comes!

Light one candle for joy, one bright candle for joy.
Ev'ry nation will find salvation in Beth'lem's baby boy.

Light one candle for love, one bright candle for love.
He brings love to ev'ry heart. He comes! He comes!

Light one candle for Christ, one bright candle for Christ.
He brings life to ev'ry heart. He comes! He comes!

Lighting of the Christ Candle ~ Lynn and Louie McClure

Over a hundred people, from the ages of two to eighty years old, were asked to fill in the blank for the statement: “My story is. . .” From the voices of different generations, hear their answers:

Amazing!

Just beginning.

A wee bit messy, with lots of love.

Privileged.

Hopeful.

Full of silliness.

Still unfolding.

Long, but good.

One of resilience.

Incomplete, thank goodness.

Multilingual.

A work in progress.

My story is not just mine, it’s tied to yours.

Tonight, we tell the story that we tell every year—the story of Christ’s birth, the story of love made flesh. It’s a story that weaves through every generation. It’s a story that picks up the bits and pieces of our narrative and braids us together. So tonight, we light the Christ candle, because from generation to generation, our story belongs to God. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

Hymn ~ *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* ~ No. 119 (verses 1 & 3)

Hark! The herald angels sing,

“Glory to the newborn king.

Peace on earth and mercy mild,

God and sinners reconciled!”

Joyful all ye nations, rise;

join the triumph of the skies;

with the angelic host proclaim,

“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

Hark! The herald angels sing,

“Glory to the newborn king!”

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!

Hail the sun of righteousness!

Light and life to all he brings,

risen with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by,

born that we no more may die,

born to raise us from the earth,

born to give us second birth.

Hark! The herald angels sing,

“Glory to the newborn king!”

Prayer of the Day

Living God, on this holy night we gather—
to stand with shepherds, amazed at your glory;
to sing with angels, rejoicing in your work;
to wait with Joseph, trusting in your promise;
to sit with Mary, cradling your love.
May the good news of this night inspire us
to tell the world of our great joy:
for to us is born a Savior,
the Messiah, the Lord.
Glory and praise to you forever! Amen.

Reading ~ *Our Misconception of the Incarnation* ~ Ronald Rolheiser

Hymn ~ Good Christian Friends, Rejoice ~ No. 132 (verses 1 & 3)

Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave:
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!

Offering

Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving/Dedication

We give you thanks, Holy One, for the world of wonder you have made—forest and field,
sea and sky and for the gift of grace that you have given—a little child,
lying in a manger. Receive these gifts of tenderness and love, of gratitude and praise, and
use them for your glory; in the name of Jesus Christ, the child of Bethlehem, we pray. Amen.

Hymn ~ What Child is This ~ No. 145 (verses 1 & 3)

What child is this, who, laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, one and all, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high.
The virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary!

Confession of Faith

**We believe
that for generations
people have gathered together
on this holy night,
because there is something about this story
that speaks to the deepest parts of us.
We believe in bundling up this hope,
this good news, and passing it on—
to our children, to our neighbors,
to the world around us.
I believe my voice can make a difference,
just like I believe this story can make a difference,
so I will not stay quiet.
I will tell this story—of a love that makes room for all.
I will sing this story—of a love that knows our name.
I will live this story—because love has come again.
I believe that words have power.
I will not stay quiet. Amen.**

Anthem

Prayer for Illumination

God of angel choruses, from the beginning of time you have been speaking words of love into this broken world. To creation you said, "It is good." To your people you said, "You are mine." To our sins you said, "You are forgiven." So tonight, we lean a little closer to you, like flowers bending toward the light, because we are hungry for your Word. Speak to our hearts once more, for we are listening. We are hungry for your good news.

Scripture

Luke 2:1-20

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” ¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Christmas Communion

Invitation to the table

Every Christmas Eve, we gather together
to tell the same story
of a baby born in a manger.
The plot never changes.
There are never any surprise twists.
So why do we do it?
Why do we keep telling this same story?
We tell this story
because our spirits need to hear it.
Over and over and over again, like water in the desert,
we need to be reminded that God has drawn close to this hurting world.
We need to be reminded that God just couldn't stay away.
From generation to generation We tell this story
This is true on Christmas Eve, and it is true at this Table.
Every time we gather at this Table, we tell the same story—
the story of a Messiah who gathered his friends together for one last supper,
the story of a Messiah who loved us so much he just couldn't stay away.
So friends, bring the parts of you that feel like the desert.

Bring the parts of you that are aching to hear this story again, because this good news is for you. God will be here, for God has always been here. So come. Come with your heart on your sleeve. Come with your hopes and your fears, your dreams and your prayers. Come with your doubt and your anger, your joy and your faith. Come—. So come. This meal is for you.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Joy and hope are in the air—

so thick we could almost bottle it up.

But we don't want to bottle up this feeling; we want to share it.

We want to share the joy of this night

with the children of this city,

with single parents,

with lonely young adults,

with our unhoused neighbors,

with those who are grieving,

with people who couldn't quite make it home for Christmas.

We want to share this hope with people who had imagined that this year would be different, that this year they would have what they were looking for. We want to share this night with families who couldn't afford to put much under the tree, as well as with those who are new to this country— fleeing a life that was unsafe or unwelcoming.

We don't want to bottle up the magic of this night; we want to share it.

We want to pour your good news all over this community.

We want to sing like Mary sang, until all who are looking for you have found their way home.

So help us live like the shepherds—who weren't afraid to go and tell the good news.

Help us take the words of the angels to heart—to not be afraid.

Help us to be as trusting as Joseph—who chose to believe the impossible.

But more than anything, give us the courage and conviction to tell this story.

In a hurting world so desperate for hope,

we have something to say.

Joy and hope are in the air—

so thick we could almost bottle it up.

But we don't want to bottle up this feeling; we want to share it.

So pour out your Spirit on this Table. Strengthen us from the inside out.

As we tell your story of good news, let us once again speak the prayer your son taught us to pray, saying:

Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Partaking of the Elements

Prayer after Communion

God of love, we came to this table hungry—Hungry for a glimpse of you. Hungry to hear the sound of angel choruses. Hungry for a meal in which all might be fed. God of manger scenes, we came to this table with our hearts on our sleeves, our prayers on our lips, and our hopes on our hearts. God of Christmas, we should not be surprised that you met us here All of all of us. And you fed us here. All of all of us. And so we sing— And again, we are in awe. Gratefully we pray, Amen.

Lighting of the Candles

Hymn ~ *Silent Night* ~ No. 122

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth

Pastoral Blessing

2022 Christmas Memorials

*In loving memory of Helen McCully
~ families of Don, John, Dean, Jean and Joan*

*In loving memory of James & Elaine
Trippany
~ John Weinhold, Jr. & Diane Trippany*

*In loving memory of Carol & John B.
Weinhold, Sr.
~ John Weinhold, Jr. & Diane Trippany*

*In loving memory of
Amanda Harris Oncken
~ Bruce and Marlene Levine*

*In honor of our family
~ Bruce and Marlene Levine*

*In loving memory of Robert & Jane
Brown Jencks
~ Doug and Betsy Cashing*

*In loving memory of Chester & Grace
Cashing
~ Doug and Betsy Cashing*

*In loving memory of
All My Loved Ones
~ Lanna Waterman*

*In loving memory of My Parents and
Grandparents
~ Martha Nanno*

*In loving memory of Our Parents and
Grandparents
~ Dave & Kay Shults*

*In loving memory of Ted Norton
~ Chris and Nan Norton and Family*

*In loving memory of Mary Daugherty
~ Wyatt Glover, Garnet Green, Laurie Glover and
Julie Barnes*

*In loving memory of Peg & Don Bergreen
~ Doug and Betsy Price*

*In loving memory of Bruce & Jeanne Polson
~ Sue Veselak, Mark Polson and Craig Polson*

*In loving memory of Sara Ellen Hausman
~ John and Susan Hausman*

